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### Human Rights Council

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Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,  
political, economic, social and cultural rights,  
including the right to development

### Written statement\* submitted by the Verein Sudwind Entwicklungspolitik, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in  
accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[31 August 2015]

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\* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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## Contemporary forms of Slavery in the I.R. Iran

In 1928, Iran passed a law<sup>1</sup> banning the sale and purchase of humans. Anyone who engaged in the purchase and sale of humans or acted as middleman or transported slaves was according to the law sentenced to 3 years imprisonment. However slavery in various forms had continued to exist in the country. This report will highlight the continuing forms of modern slavery which are still in practice.

The root causes of modern slavery derive from poverty, social exclusion, discrimination, cultural practices and violence against women. Contemporary forms of slavery in Iran are manifested in early child marriage, sexual slavery, sale and rent of children and the sale of wives for sexual exploitation. Some forms of slavery are embedded in the law and enforce traditional practices.

### Child Early and Forced Marriage

Article 4 of the Iranian Constitution<sup>2</sup> makes the Islamic criteria, the base foundation of the law. According to Article 1041 of the Civil law, the father and paternal grandfather have the sole right to marry a girl of any age (even an infant) to a man of any age (pending permission by court). Consummation of marriage has no legal age boundary.

In 3.2014-3.2015 (Iranian calendar), 40404 girls below the age of 15 were officially married off.<sup>3</sup>

According to Article 1041, marriage of girls above 13 is permissible if the father or paternal grandfather approves. The court's approval is not necessary in such cases.

According to national organization for civil registration's statistics 114459 girls between 15 and 19 were married off official last year.<sup>4</sup>

### Sale or Rent of children and child labour

Thousands of children work on the streets of the big cities especially Tehran. According to social workers' research 80 percent of these children are Afghan children who are often sold to or rented to criminal gangs, who send them on the streets to sell small items such as flower or chewing gums. The price of these children depending on age, sex and experience ranges from one to four million Tomans (around \$300-\$1200)<sup>5</sup>. The Iranian children who are sold or rented are mostly the children of those who migrate to Tehran and live in extreme poverty but also children of addictive families are included.

These children are highly at risk of sexual abuse, addiction and both physical and psychological violence. Another area of child labour is carpet-weaving industry which traditionally uses young girls, as their small fingers weave smaller knots and therefore better quality carpet.

### Child and Drug Addiction

According to Fatemeh Daneshvar, Head of Social Committee at Tehran Municipal Council talking to "Iran Daily Paper" and referring to a documentary on the life of children forced to work<sup>6</sup>, those who one or both parents are drug addicts often become addicted by them and then sent to work at various places. Brick making factories, small mechanic

<sup>1</sup> <http://rc.majlis.ir/fa/law/show/91872>

<sup>2</sup> **Article 4:** All civil, penal financial, economic, administrative, cultural, military, political, and other laws and regulations must be based on Islamic criteria. This principle applies absolutely and generally to all articles of the Constitution as well as to all other laws and regulations, and the fuqaha' of the Guardian Council are judges in this matter

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.sabteahval.ir/Upload/Modules/Contents/asset99/eg93.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <http://iran-newspaper.com/Newspaper/BlockPrint/74262>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.aparat.com/v/igbYkr/>

workshops, rubbish collection sites are the most common places of work for these groups of children. Any income from such menial child labour goes to parents or the criminal gangs who either rent or buy them. There are no official statistics on children working in such varied places.

### **Prostitution**

There exist no statistics on the number, age, social status and background of thousands of women who sell their bodies either on the streets of big cities or in special houses. It is understood that the age of prostitution is annually going down to even 12.

The root cause of forced prostitution in Iran is poverty, addiction and social depravation. There had been cases where the husband prostitutes his wife to cater for his addiction.

### **Traffic in Women and children to other countries**

Iranian women and girls had been transported and traffic in to the neighbouring countries for prostitution. The gangs who deal with such activities use the country both as a source, a route and destination for smuggling women to and from neighbouring countries. Unfortunately, reliable statistics on the number of victims do not exist. The Islamic Republic of Iran does not permit research in any areas of contemporary forms of slavery and such social problem with its diverse forms is labelled as a "Security" matter. Therefore, field research, collection of data and publication of work has not been possible by independent experts until now. Iranian women and girls not only are exploited for forced prostitution and marriage inside Iran but also are sent to Pakistan, Turkey, Qatar, Kuwait, United Emirate Arab, Iraq, France and England.

### **Recommendations**

- Providing statistics on child labour, homeless women, and sex workers in Iran.
- Implementation of laws, programs, and facilities to help women leave abusive relationships safely.
- The annulment of Articles in the Civil law and Family law which give free hand to fathers and paternal grandfathers to force girl children to forced, early marriages.
- Eradication of poverty as the root cause of child exploitation.
- Universal, free education for all children, awareness and prevention campaigns to stop the sale, rent and exploitation of children.
- Implementation of proper law and practice against criminal gangs and human traffickers who benefit specially from exploitation of women and children.
- Dealing with drugs and drug addiction, which, is an increasing social problem in Iran.
- Taking children who work on the streets and workshops and sweatshops into care and providing them with opportunities and access to education and a better future.